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ABSTRACT

This report describes the program, parental reactions, and teacher evaluations of a Shortened Day Program (4 1/2 hours) for first year primary students. Instigated at the request of teachers, the program was designed to help young children make the transition from a half day of kindergarten to a full 6-hour day of first year school. Mathematics and reading reinforcement were emphasized. Parent reaction plus teacher evaluation gave the program an affirmative endorsement. (CS)

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CENTER SCHOOL
Woodbridge, Connecticut

REPORT

SHORTENED SCHOOL DAY PROGRAM

1970-71

Mr. Alexander M. Raffone
Superintendent of Schools

PS 007184

May 28, 1971

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Introduction

The initial year of a program for first-year students has now been completed in the Woodbridge Public Schools. The program was entitled the "Shortened Day Program", and its objective was to determine what benefits or deficits might accrue to children involved in such programs. Up to this year our school day for all primary students went from 9 A.M. to 3 P.M. Under the shortened day program, however, first-year students ended their day one and one-half hours earlier than in previous years, so that school ended for these children at 1:30 P.M.

The program was initiated by the first-year primary teachers as an outgrowth of their observations and knowledge of child development. In their proposal, these teachers had expressed a desire for an opportunity to put into practice a program specifically designed to meet the needs of the child who is moving from a half-day of school as a kindergartener to a full day of school as a first-year student.

For many years, these teachers have been telling us that the six-hour school day was too long and that the long day often developed negative rather than positive attitudes toward school. This program gave the staff the opportunity it was seeking, namely, to study and report to the Board the impact of a shortened school day. The report that follows is the teachers' report to the Board.

No report dealing with children would be complete unless it contained the reactions of parents. A parent questionnaire was distributed and the results are reported here. Parent reaction plus teacher evaluation give the program an affirmative endorsement.

The superintendent has observed the program in action and has, after careful review, concluded that the recommendation by the staff to continue the program be submitted for consideration and approval by the Board of Education.

Alexander M. Raffone
Superintendent of Schools

6/1/71

SECTION I

PHASES OF PROGRAM

SECTION I

Phases of Program

During the year, the Shortened Day Program for First Year pupils consisted of four phases. A brief description of each phase and its associated Teacher Evaluation follows:

Phase I and II (September 21st - January 8th)

Phase I - Words-In-Color Re-enforcement Groups (2nd Year pupils)

Participants - (19 pupils) Six groups of youngsters, working with three teachers, four afternoons per week with each instructional session being 25 minutes.

Identification

1) By First Year Teachers
2) Groups include pupils who did not complete the program last year but who would benefit by its completion.

Phase II - Reading and Mathematics Re-enforcement (2nd Year pupils)

Reading Re-enforcement

Participants - (15 pupils) Six groups of youngsters, working with three teachers, four afternoons per week, with each instructional session being 25 minutes.

Identification

1) Referrals by Second Year Teachers
2) Tested and reviewed by Reading Specialist
3) Pupils not included in the regular Corrective Reading Program worked with the First Year Teachers

Mathematics Re-enforcement

Participants - (9 pupils) Two groups of youngsters working with one teacher (with assistance from the Math Specialist) four afternoons per week with each instructional session being 25 minutes.

Identification

1) Referrals by Second Year Teachers
2) Reviewed by Mathematics Specialist

Evaluation of Phase I and II (by the Second Year Teachers)

The Second Year Teachers were asked their opinion regarding this question:

> "Did the participating children from your class benefit from the mathematics or reading re-enforcement activities carried on with the First Year Teachers during the early part of the school year?"

The answers were as follows:

1. Some of those who received extra help in math really benefited, progressing from Level III to V. The extra individual help in small groups made this possible.

2. Completing Words-In-Color Charts helped students to progress in their reading at a more rapid pace. They enjoyed this time given to them by the teachers.

3. Child developed more self-confidence and seemed to gain in self-confidence as well as being happier and more content.

4. The extra help was just enough to keep the children from falling behind and getting discouraged.

5. The improvement was quite noticeable in the reading. The shorter school day makes valuable help available to second year students.

6. These children needed the extra individual help to bring them more in line with the class.

All the Second Year Teachers were of the opinion that the children participating in this program really benefited and recommended the continuation of the Shortened Day Program.

Phase III - Enrichment Program (January 13th to February 11th)

1. Procedure

   a. Each First Year Teacher organized the class into three groups.

   b. Each group remained with the classroom teacher one full afternoon per week for enrichment activities.

2. Brief Description of Enrichment Activities

   The variety of activities used in the Enrichment Program ranged from aesthetic to academic. Art was correlated with holidays, seasons, puppetry, props for an operetta and the making of small gifts. Music was used to stimulate rhythmic movements and interpretations, as well as to provide an introduction to European countries through folk dancing. Dramatization and pantomine of favorite stories proved enjoyable for the children.

   Filmstrips were used for enjoyment and were usually followed by a drawn or written expression of a favorite segment. The tape recorder was used for poetry recitation, reading, musical solos and creative thinking (i.e. Would you like to go into space with the astronauts?). The use of a printing press, wood block printing and potato printing provided another learning situation.

   Mathematical problems became meaningful in the counting of table settings and in the measurement of liquids to make cocoa and Kool-Aid.

3. Evaluation (by First Year Teachers)

   The above activities and the small size of the groups afforded teachers the opportunity to know the children better. All the children participated in the activities, many of which would not have been possible in a large group situation. Shy children were able to communicate more readily with a smaller number of peers and all worked energetically at their tasks. As the children became more aware of each others' abilities, they also showed compassion for their peers. Behavior of individuals improved in the classroom the day following enrichment. The five-week Enrichment Program was a successful one.

SECTION II

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRES

SECTION II

Composites of Parent Questionnaire

In an effort to measure parental attitudes toward the Shortened Day Program, a questionnaire was developed by our staff. Although the majority of the responses were intended to be of the short answer variety, opportunity was provided for open-ended responses of specific likes and dislikes of the program.

We have received returns of eighty-one (81) questionnaires representing 57% of the First Year Parents.

The composites have been separated into two groups for the purpose of this presentation.

Composite A - This composite represents the responses of parents who would like to see the program continued. (67 positive responses to item #9)

Composite B - This composite represents the responses of parents who would not like to see the program continued. (14 negative responses to item #9)

The results of the questionnaire are being presented in this manner so that both positive and negative reactions and comments would be obvious to the reader.

COMPOSITE A

COMPOSITE - Affirmative - would like to see program continued (67 responses)

A

CENTER SCHOOL
Woodbridge, Connecticut

Shortened School Day Questionnaire

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Please complete and return to school.

1. Do you feel that the academic needs of your child were met in this Shortened School Day Program? Yes 66 No 1

2. Do you feel that the social needs of your child were met in this program? Yes 62 No 4

3. Were you initially in favor of the program? Yes 44 No 20

4. What is your assessment of your child's attitude toward:
   a. Shortened Day (1:30 p.m.) Positive 64 Negative 1
   b. Enrichment Day (3:00 p.m.) Positive 60 Negative 3
   c. The longer school day (3:00 p.m.) Positive 49 Negative 12

5. What is your assessment of the Enrichment Program?
   Excellent - program provided an interesting and enjoyable transition from shortened school day to full school day. Children were enthusiastic and enjoyed their activities.

6. Would you like to see the Enrichment Program continued?
   Yes 53 No 6

7. Would you like to see the Enrichment Program expanded?
   Yes 32 No 10

   If yes, indicate your recommendations:
   Expanded - started earlier in school year

   Suggestions for activities: field trips, reading enrichment, creative writing, self-expression through drama, dance and music

8. How is your child using his free time resulting from early dismissal?
   Resting and relaxed play, visiting and playing with other children, time for mother and child to share together, social activities (dancing, music, swimming lessons)

9. Would you like to see the Shortened School Day program continued? Yes 67 No -

   If yes, check the appropriate box.
   a. As presently organized ☐ 30
   b. Shortened Day for entire year ☐ 9
   c. Shortened Day until January 1st ☐ 23
   d. Shortened Day until the middle of April ☐ 3

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10. Did the early dismissal time cause any specific problems for you? Yes 13 No 54

If yes, please indicate:

Broke up free time, not enough time for early afternoon appointments and errands. Special arrangements had to be made by working mothers.

11. In general what did you like about the program?

The gradual adjustment from ½ day in kindergarten to full day in 1st grade. Child had all his academic needs fulfilled without exhaustion from full day. Child had positive attitude toward school.

12. In general what did you dislike about the program?

Lunch served too late for some classes - children hungry in late morning - maybe need snacks. Program didn't last long enough.

13. Any additional comments, suggestions, recommendations: (Use reverse side if necessary)

Slower transition to full day: 1 day a week for a week
2 days " " "
3 days " " "
etc.

Pupil's Name _____

Parent's Signature _____

2/22/71

COMPOSITE B

COMPOSITE - Negative - would not like to see program continued (14 responses)

B

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Woodbridge, Connecticut

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Shortened School Day Questionnaire

Please complete and return to school.

1. Do you feel that the academic needs of your child were met in this Shortened School Day Program? Yes 3 No 9

2. Do you feel that the social needs of your child were met in this program? Yes 5 No 7

3. Were you initially in favor of the program? Yes 4 No 9

4. What is your assessment of your child's attitude toward:
   a. Shortened Day (1:30 p.m.) Positive 3 Negative 8.
   b. Enrichment Day (3:00 p.m.) Positive 11 Negative 2.
   c. The longer school day (3:00 p.m.) Positive 12 Negative 2.

5. What is your assessment of the Enrichment Program?

   Program gave children a taste of the longer day session.

6. Would you like to see the Enrichment Program continued?
   Yes 9 No 2

7. Would you like to see the Enrichment Program expanded?
   Yes 7 No 1

   If yes, indicate your recommendations:

   Encourage creativeness and development of hobbies.

8. How is your child using his free time resulting from early dismissal?

   Playtime - both quiet activities and playing with other children.

   Time with mother.

9. Would you like to see the Shortened School Day program continued? Yes _ No 14

   If yes, check the appropriate box.
   a. As presently organized ☐
   b. Shortened Day for entire year ☐
   c. Shortened Day until January 1st ☐
   d. Shortened Day until the middle of April ☐

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

10. Did the early dismissal time cause any specific problems for you? Yes 10 No 4

If yes, please indicate:

Working mothers, inconvenient

Reduced amount of free time for parents

Children had no one to play with until others got home from school.

11. In general what did you like about the program?

Good for kids less nature.

12. In general what did you dislike about the program?

More learning accomplished in longer day.

13. Any additional comments, suggestions, recommendations: (Use reverse side if necessary)

Entrance age should be changed

"Bored with shortened day"

Concentrate more on reading, writing, etc. - forget some of the frills.

Pupil's Name _____

Parent's Signature _____

2/22/71

SECTION III

SUMMARY

SECTION III

Summary

The Shortened Day Program for First Year students was even more successful than we had expected. As a faculty we found no negative aspects to the program as it affected the children. With more experience and insight we can work out any problems in the mechanics of the program.

Attitudes

The attitude of the children to school, to their work and to each other during the shortened day was extremely positive. They were cooperative, imaginative, and eager to accept challenges of all kinds. Because of their attitude our work could be concentrated and efficient. We moved from one lesson to the next with a minimum loss of time. As a result the day was intense but pleasant. The children worked with obvious delight and involvement, left school with a good feeling, and were eager to return the next day.

Academics

We felt that the academic needs of the youngsters were met during the Shortened Day Program. Generally, pupils were progressing in the areas of Reading and Mathematics at expected rates and at levels which correlate with the levels of previous First Year classes (Gates-MacGinitie Reading tests, Mathematics Levels, Reading Levels).

Enrichment

We were pleased with the possibilities offered by the enrichment phase of the program for First Year students. It was a good first step in the transition to a longer day. The children viewed it as a special privilege and looked forward to it. They enjoyed being part of the small group, and it gave us a chance to know them more intimately, especially the quieter, more reserved children. We could carry out activities which would have been unsuitable for a large group. The small group situation provided a social learning experience in which each child's contribution was necessary to the success of the activity. Using the experience gained in the first year and more planning time at the beginning of the year, we feel that this phase of the program can be expanded and developed.

Full Day Sessions

Since we have been on the longer day, we see a marked change in the children. Because the foundation had been carefully laid, they looked forward to the full day and at first were able to maintain their previous high level of performance. However, the cumulative effect has worn their enthusiasm thin, and the behavior and attitudes which made us recommend the shortened day program in the first place are now in evidence.

SECTION IV

RECOMMENDATIONS

SECTION IV

Recommendations

We recommend: Continuation of the Shortened Day Program as follows:

1. School hours for First Year pupils continue to be from 9:00 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. (including lunch) until the beginning of the month of March.

2. Beginning with the month of March, school hours for First Year pupils will revert to the 9:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. day.

3. The Enrichment Phase of the Shortened Day Program should be expanded. We will accomplish this by beginning this phase during the first week of January.